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ZOÖLOGY.[1]

RARE SNAKES FROM FLORIDA. — Mrs. A. D. Lungren, of Volusia, has made collections in natural history which have added a number of facts of interest to the herpetology of Florida. She has obtained the *Contia pygæa*, a calamarian form, of which but two specimens are known, both from Volusia. The second specimen of *Dromicus flavilatus* comes from her collections. It will be remembered that the first specimen of this rare species was procured by Dr. H. C. Yarrow, on the coast of North Carolina, at Fort Macon. She has also found the *Helicops Allenii* in the same neighborhood, and a new species of *Chorophilus* (*C. verrucosus* Cope). Persons desiring collections from that region, in any department of natural history, cannot do better than communicate with her. — E. D. C.

RED-BELLIED NUT-HATCH (SITTA CANADENSIS) NESTING ON THE GROUND (?). — On the 27th of May the son of a neighbor brought me four eggs from a nest he discovered in the woods, stating that it was built in a hole in the ground, and that he found it by the old bird's leaving it and attempting to lead him away by the well-known artifices of many ground-building birds. The nest contained six eggs, white, with a faint blush, well covered, especially at the larger end, with coarse reddish-brown spots, mingled with a few faint lilac ones. While he was removing the eggs the bird was very courageous, and seemed much inclined to attack him, but when frightened away alighted on the side of a tree, up which she ran "like a woodpecker." He described the bird as follows: In size, quite small; color of back, blue; of breast and under parts, reddish-brown, a very little white on it, and quite a long bill. As this description was volunteered without any questioning on my part, I think it must be quite correct; and, taken with the climbing habits of the bird, I can think of no bird which it can indicate but the red-bellied nut-hatch, though I have never known that bird to be described as nesting elsewhere than in a tree or stump. The eggs measured .65X.55, and were quite fresh. The next morning I visited the nest, hoping to see the bird and obtain the remaining eggs, but they had been removed, probably by the old bird, as the nest was unknown to other persons. The nest was built about a foot from the base of a pine amongst a clump of those trees, and was about two inches in diameter and four in depth, going down through the pine needles to the ground; and on a few of the needles the eggs were laid. If I am right in my conclusions as to the species, I think that this case must be quite unique both in locality and method of nesting. — FRANK H. NUTTER, West Roxbury, Mass.

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[1] The departments of Ornithology and Mammalogy are conducted by Dr. ELLIOTT COUES, U. S. A.

ON A TRANSITORY FŒTAL STRUCTURE IN THE EMBRYOS OF SERPENTS AND LIZARDS.[1] — In the prosecution of his studies in biology the student cannot fail frequently to meet with structures and organs destined to have but a transient existence. A closer insight into the nature of these cases reveals the fact that they are naturally divisible into two groups. In one group, these structures, although very transient in their duration, subserve, while they exist, important functions, and are often quite indispensable to the development of the embryo. In the other group the most rigorous investigation fails to detect any purpose connected with the life of the subject for which they were called into existence. They serve only as illustrations of a general plan of development. Such are the rudimentary teeth developed in the jaw of the whalebone whale (*Balæna mysticetus*) prior to the appearance of baleen plates or permanent teeth, and corresponding rudimentary incisive teeth in the upper jaw of the Ruminantia, which are never followed by teeth having any functional character.

To the former group belong all those obvious and essential structures in the development-history of the mammalia, including also a few whose function seems so simple and transient, yet often important, as to be frequently overlooked. It is to one of the latter class to which we wish to draw the attention of the society.

It is a fact well known even to common observation that at the end of the beak of the fœtal chick there exists a sharp process or horn which is evidently employed instinctively to break the brittle shell of the egg when the chick has arrived at fœtal maturity. A very similar structure is found on the beak of some of the embryo turtles; at least in the genus *Emysaurus* in that group of reptiles. In both birds and reptiles it disappears soon after exclusion from the egg.

Somewhat recently, Dr. Weinland, of Germany, claims to have discovered in all the snakes of that country, and in many lizards, that a small, sharp tooth is developed in the premaxillary bone of the upper jaw designed to cut and tear the tough egg membrane that surrounds the fœtus, and thus furnish important aid in its liberation. This observation of Dr. Weinland is quoted by Owen in the last edition of his great work on Comparative Anatomy, and also by Agassiz in his Contributions to the Natural History of the United States, and by both writers with acceptance, but without personal verification. My observations, which have been made upon embryos of several genera and species of serpents and lizards of this country, have not enabled me to confirm the observations of Dr. Weinland; on the contrary, I feel quite sure that no such structures exist in the fœtuses of the genera *Eutænia* and *Storeria* among our snakes, nor in the fœtus of the genus *Scincus* among lizards. But without expressing a doubt about the correctness of the observations of Dr. Weinland, I am compelled upon the basis of my own researches to call in question the universality of the rule; and as the indorsement of Professors Owen and Agassiz is without personal verification, I cannot regard them as having any positive value in the decision of such a question. — A. SAGER.

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[1] Presented to the Ann Arbor Scientific Society, July, 1876.

ANTHROPOLOGY.

ANTHROPOLOGICAL NEWS. — *Ergänzungsheft* 50 of Petermann's *Mittheilungen* contains E. de Pruyssenaere's account of his journeys and discoveries in the region of the White and the Blue Nile. The seventh chapter (pp. 18–27), relates to the population of the Upper White Nile, and especially to the Dengas.

Murray issues a volume entitled, The Cradle of the Blue Nile; A Visit to the Court of King John of Ethiopia, by E. A. de Cosson.

In *Nature*, April 26th, is a lengthy review of a paper on the races and tribes of the Chad Basin, in *Zeitschrift der Gesellschaft für Erdkunde*, by Dr. G. Nachtigall.

We have received from the author, W. L. Distant, two pamphlets, reprints from the *Journal of the Anthropological Institute*, entitled respectively, On the Term Religion as used in Anthropology; and, Our Knowledge of the Nicobarians. The same gentleman exhibited to the Institute, April 24th, photographs of the people of the Andaman and Malacca islands.

The Journal of the Victoria Institute, vol. x., just issued, contains some valuable articles reviewing the grounds of modern speculations, especially in England.

Nos. 3 and 4 of *Matériaux* appear together. The principal communication of importance to students, outside of France, is that of M. Ernest Chantre, describing the collections of bronze implements exhibited at the last meeting of the Congress of Prehistoric Archæology, held during the past summer at Buda Pesth.

The Russian Geographical Society will publish a description of the upper part of the Oxus, of the Hindoo Koosh, and of the Western Himalayas. The work will be accompanied by ethnographical maps and vocabularies.

In *The Academy* for April 21st and 28th, Mr. Percy Gardiner reviews